

## Prep School Initiative Announced

### Perez Hopes Students 'Make A Difference'

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July 22 2005

On the campus of the private Watkinson School Thursday, Hartford Mayor Eddie A. Perez officially announced his initiative to hook city children up with scholarships and financial aid for 17 exclusive college prep schools around the state.

The program is part of an effort to increase enrollment of city children in four-year colleges by 25 percent. Of the Hartford freshmen who started in 1999, only two-thirds graduated from high school, and only 20 percent of the graduates enrolled in four-year colleges.

Perez said he hopes that after the students earn their degrees and see more of the world, they will return and enrich the city by taking jobs in Hartford and joining in civic life.

"I tell students if you make it because Hartford gave you a chance, then come back and make a difference," Perez said.

Standing beside him was Karl J. Krapek, former president and chief operating officer of United Technologies Corp., who is chairman of the committee spearheading Perez's private school initiative. "You can't have a great region of 29 towns without a strong central city," Krapek said. Improving educational opportunities for the city's children will help make the city stronger, he said.

The 17 schools have pledged \$11 million worth of scholarship and financial aid to be phased in over four years. And a new foundation, called the Hartford Youth Scholars Foundation, will raise money to provide more financial aid, assist in arranging transportation and pay staff to help parents and students navigate the private school world.

This past school year, 160 Hartford students enrolled in the private schools under the new partnership, and the number will rise to 197 this fall.

Marion Dietrich, director of admissions for The Master's School in Simsbury, said the biggest issue Hartford students face in attending her school is finding transportation.

"A lot of moms are single or the moms and dads are working very long hours and they can't get out of work to come and get their child," Dietrich said. "Oftentimes kids have to wait hours for a ride."

Students applying to the private schools must satisfy admissions requirements. At The Master's School, which has a typical admissions process, applicants take screening tests for reading comprehension, math and vocabulary, provide a writing sample, fill out an extensive application that includes several essay questions, and go through an interview.

In the future, students may call the new foundation for more information. But until that office is established, those interested can call the mayor's office at 860-543-8500.

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